California Office of Systems Integration

Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System – Web-Based Training

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Office of Systems Integration
SERVING CALIFORNIA

Statewide Project Implementation and Management

Executive Summary

The Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System (SFIS) was developed by the Office of Systems Integration (OSI) in conjunction with the California Department of Social Services. The system uses fingerprint-imaging technology to eliminate duplicate payments, either through administrative error or illicit intent, in the State's public-assistance programs.

The California Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System Management Team has ownership over the installation and maintenance of the SFIS system. In January of 2001, the SFIS Management Team installed the SFIS in all of California's 58 counties. The scope of the SFIS Management Team's ownership of the project changed from installing the systems to providing support for the counties.

A 2004 review of the SFIS system revealed a startling fact. A mere 18 percent of county end users were taking advantage of the state SFIS Management Team's training seminars. This led to the insufficient, inconsistent training that threatened the efficacy of the SFIS system. Without proper biometric intake, SFIS would not realize its full potential.

The SFIS Management Team along with the SFIS county Coordinators explored many different training delivery systems – reimbursing counties to send their employees to a state training facility or having a state trainer go to each county – the ultimate solution, which is supported by the Training Industry's best practices, was the development of a Web-based training (WBT) program.

The strength of the WBT program, and the reason it succeed in increasing the number of properly-trained end users, is that the training it imparts is user-paced, and standardized. The program consists of two components: on-demand modules and online meetings/webcasts.

The WBT program, born out of collaboration between the state and the counties, increased the number of properly trained stakeholders. This bettered the county's ability to intake biometrics leading to the realization of the full fraud fighting potential of the SFIS. The training was disseminated in the most effective and efficient manner giving those trained on SFIS WBT flexibility and standards. This exemplifies the best practices of training, which in this case is a government to government interaction.

Description

Business Problem

California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) and the Federal and State Food Stamp Program jointly distribute nearly $500 million through California's 58 counties to more than a million recipients every month. In many ways, these programs are extensions of our best qualities: empathy for the misfortune of others, caring for those who have fallen upon hard times (including over a million children), and an understanding that our society is better when everyone in it can meet the most basic needs of life.

Unfortunately, for every quality that a human and a society can possess to make it great, there is another that can just as easily manifest to make it terrible. Empathy can be met with disdain, caring with opportunism, and understanding with a destructive selfishness; criminal welfare fraud makes a mockery of our public assistance institutions, a mockery of our best instincts from which these institutions are born, and a mockery of the people who pay for these institutions. It is, therefore, imperative for government – for taxpayers and the people who depend on public assistance – to actively combat welfare fraud and ensure that being caring does not preclude being careful.

In January 2001, the state of California, in the form of the Health & Human Service's Office of Systems Integration (OSI), installed in all 58 Californian counties a Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System (SFIS). This intake technology uses the best practices in biometric identification to ensure that duplicate payments, caused either by administrative error or illicit intent, are eliminated. This increases the confidence tax payers have in California's public assistance system, as well as make sure that money dedicated to eligible adults and children was not being wasted. With the systems installed, OSI's SFIS Management Team moved from dispersing and installing the technology to supporting it: providing a help desk, preventative and remedial maintenance, and training.

Although the SFIS Management Team had set up a support structure for the 58 counties, a 2004 review of the utilization of training seminars revealed a disturbing fact: a mere 18 percent of active county-level SFIS end users had attended the scheduled classroom training. This low level of participation indicates a score of problems. State resources dedicated to the training of County intake officers were being underutilized. This led to inconsistent, insufficient SFIS training. Furthermore, inaccessible training tools mean county SFIS coordinators have no standards or metrics by which to measure their employees. And, most importantly, the SFIS program was not reaching its potential when it came to eliminating duplicate payments because county end users were not being properly trained.

Although training resources were in place, the delivery mechanism for these resources was ineffective. Finding a new way to communicate the training expertise from the state to the counties was needed.

Barriers, Opportunities, and Solutions
The barrier to the success of the SFIS training program was its inaccessibility to the 58 counties and a lack of communication between the counties and the state regarding how training would be disseminated. A training program that would overcome this barrier would need to be easily available and would need a communication strategy to popularize it amongst the county SFIS coordinators.

The need to develop a new training delivery mechanism was not just a challenge for the SFIS Management team but also an opportunity to revisit the process of choosing a delivery system. This time, the selection of a training delivery method was not a directive from the state, but rather a collaboration between the SFIS Management team and the County level SFIS Coordinators and Trainers. The state-level Management Team had the knowledge of what standards were necessary in a training program; the county-level Coordinators had the experience of how best those standards could be made accessible. The merging of these two expertises from two different government entities is the embodiment of how technology solutions can better the execution of government to government responsibilities and programs.

Although many different training delivery systems were explored – reimbursing counties to send their employees to a state training facility or having a state trainer go to each county – the ultimate solution – directed by the collaboration between the SFIS management team and the SFIS Coordinators and supported by the best practices of the Training Industry – was the development of a Web-based training (WBT) program.

With a new training delivery strategy in place, the obligation fell on the SFIS Management team to make sure the training was being utilized. The SFIS Management team took these actions to ensure this:

> • Every time a SFIS user logged in to the system, systematic bulletin board messages promoted the new WBT program
> • Monthly e-mail invitations to train on the WBT program were sent to all county SFIS Coordinators
> • The WBT program was promoted during any state-led classroom training
> • Referrals to the WBT program were made by help desk agents during calls
> • Monthly inserts advertising the WBT program were put into the California Welfare Directors Association's IT Newsletter

The new WBT program coupled with the 5-point communication plan is the solution to remedy the problems of the previous training system and maximize the benefits of the SFIS. The first generation of SFIS WBT was fully implemented in 2005.

Content and Architecture of the SFIS WBT Program:
The strength of the WBT program, and the reason it would succeed in increasing the number of properly-trained end users, is that the training it imparts is user-paced, and standardized. The program consists of two components: on-demand modules and online

meetings/webcasts. The state OSI SFIS Management team owned the production and dissemination of the Web-based training project.

On-Demand Modules

The on-demand modules are short, interactive, self-directed "classes" that can be easily accessed by virtually any computer with Internet access, provided that the user has a Web site operator ID and password (http://www.sfis.ca.gov/training_page.html). A "class" consists of specified modules in a specified order. All of the previous instructor-led classrooms, with the exception of one, had a correlating module in the new WBT program.

Online Meetings/Webcasts

The one instructor-led class that did not have a module analog was the "Train the Trainer" seminar. This need was supplemented by creating an online meeting/webcast functionality which provided for real-time, face-to-face contact with a SFIS system expert. Using Webcast technology, the end-user is able to communicate with the system expert regarding any issue that falls beyond those presented in the modules.

Evaluation Results:
Between December 2005 and July 2006, 229 evaluations were received for the WBT program. Approximately 95 percent scored the WBT as either "Excellent" or "Good," 4 percent rated the WBT program as "Fair," and exactly zero end users rated the WBT as "Poor."
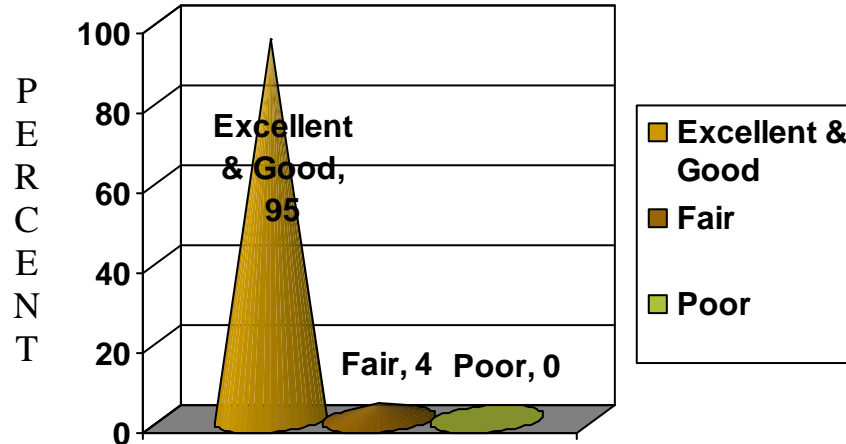
In addition to this voluntary rating system, the end users were able to make suggestions on how to improve the WBT program. In the first generation, minor suggestions for improvements were made, and exhibiting the collaborative spirit that made this project a success were immediately incorporated.

Significance of the SFIS WBT Program

The most significant part of the SFIS WBT program is that it uses collaboration between state and county governments to answer the mandate to protect against welfare fraud and waste. This realization of this goal gives taxpayers more confidence in California's public assistance operations, as well as makes sure that the money in these programs are going to people who need them, not to criminals.

The first generation of SFIS WBT affected every aspect of SFIS training. The program increased the standard of training, decreased the cost of training, increased the number of trainees, bettered the state's management operation, and improved the efficacy of the SFIS program resulting in less money lost to duplicate payments. A properly trained SFIS intake staff will effectively eliminate duplicate payments made for the following reasons:

> • A simple administrative error
> • A misrepresentation of identity by a client in an attempt to collect additional benefits
> • An incorrect payment resulting from the client's misunderstanding of payments, for example in the event those payments were continued after death of an aided family member
> • An incorrect payment resulting from an individual's claiming to be someone else and attempting to collect their benefit (identity theft)

Increased Training Quality
The standardization of training for the entirety of the stakeholders ensures that those who receive training are receiving it at a level that will allow them to use the SFIS effectively.

Increase in the Number of Trained Employees
The ease with which an end user can access the SFIS WBT program means additional stakeholders were able to receive training. These groups include: new-hire California Department of Social Services analysts, new-hire OSI/SFIS analysts, contracted help desk agents, county fraud investigators, temporary county employees, county portable client input operators, and county system administrators and supervisors. The addition of these groups to the county client input operators and the county SFIS coordinators and trainers makes it so all groups affected by the SFIS system can be trained in its operation.

This significant goal was achieved while decreasing the cost of training employees. No longer would subject-matter experts need to travel to training sites, meaning the support staff avoided travel costs and had more time to focus on other SFIS support operations.

Improving State Management Operations
Another significant advantage of the WBT systems is that it improves the state's ability to process bids for the continuation of the SFIS program. California's Procurement Control Agency requires that potential bidders be provided with documentable, standardized demonstrations of the technologies and services they are bidding on. The

SFIS Management Team was able to meet these requirements by posting movie-like demonstrations on the WBT program for the contractors.

Public Benefits of the SFIS WBT Program

Using the best practices in training techniques and inter-government collaboration the public all stakeholders experienced significant benefits with the implementation of the SFIS WBT program. The public – meaning Californian taxpayers and eligible beneficiaries of the CalWORKs and Federal and State Food Stamp programs – realized fantastic returns from having a properly trained staff to intake the biometrics. The resulting reduction of fraudulent payments increases the integrity of public assistance programs, instills a confidence that taxpayers must have in public assistance programs, and makes sure that monies meant to assuage the misfortune of beneficiaries go towards providing food, diapers, and shelter, and not toward fraudulent claims.

> • OSI estimates that the SFIS saves approximates $68 million a year in the elimination of duplicate payments

The State and County Departments involved realize a specific cost avoidance of being able to deliver training – which translates to better services – in the most cost efficient way possible. Compared to the other reviewed training delivery methods, the approximately $6,000 cost of the first generation of WBT allowed for significant cost avoidance.

> • Avoid cost to send State trainer to all sites = $94,875 per year, assuming training is only needed one time per year, per site

> • Avoid cost to send all county operators to Training Centers = $1,322,100 per year, assuming training is only needed one time per year.

Beyond the cost-savings realized by a better trained SFIS intake workforce and the cost-avoidance realized by delivering the SFIS training through the WBT, there were a number of specific benefits of this project. There was a reduction of errors in the state's welfare system. Errors detected on the SFIS database are often also present in the state's Department of Health Services' Statewide Client Index (SCI), which interfaces to California's four welfare systems. The program also expanded training to all stakeholders, instead of just county intake officers. A strong, closer relationship was formed between the state and its stakeholders, particularly the counties. Finally, the program increased taxpayer confidence in the integrity of California's public assistance programs.

The anticipated benefits of increasing SFIS training were realized. All these benefits, financial and otherwise, would not have been realized without the participation of the state and the counties in a textbook example of using technology to better government-to-government processes.